Technology. Good or Bad?

It is a common attitude in the environmental movement that technology is something to be avoided. I have read posts and articles by multiple people that advocate the throwing away of technology, but the truth remains that we are tool making creatures. We have close animal relatives who use tools to this day and they still manage to live in harmony with nature while using appropriate technology. Primates use sticks and rocks, birds use sticks and otters use rocks. When we observe this in nature we can conclude that using tools and technology is neither good nor bad. It is the use to which they are put along, with the way they are implemented, that makes their impact good or bad. However some people think we should just to get rid of it all.

Unless we want to return to the trees it is impossible to remove all technology. The fire we use for heat, the shoes we wear on our feet, and the clothes that cover our bodies are all examples of technology. The use of tools is a part of our existence as human beings. They have been a piece of our lives ever since our ancestors started their first intentional fire. Technology flows through our history like the golden threads of a beautiful tapestry. We have let the tapestry get dirty and now it needs cleaning up.

The dirt on our tapestry is the result of technologies use by humans. When we were a young species we didn’t know how to clean up the messes we were leaving behind. We didn’t understand that pouring stuff in the water would kill us later. We didn’t understand that planting the same crop in the same place each year affected the quality. We certainly didn’t know that burning wood was putting pollution into the air. However we have learned better. But, in the course of learning, we let people take control who didn’t care. They used the methods and products for their own selfish needs and didn’t care about the effect on other people.

It is this lack of caring that lies at the core of our environmental problems. So many of our problems from war to racism to abuse to crime find fertile ground here. It is fed by the economic system which encourages the amassing of personal profit at the expense of others. In order to prevent further environmental degradation we need to change this. Only when we have truly modified our mentality and approach to life can lasting changes be made. Any changes we make in the meantime will certainly suffer from that short-sighted approach to life. Technology will always be a part of us but we have to approach it in a rational and compassionate way.